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Canning Meat on the Farm

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A radio interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Morse Salisbury, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC stations, Monday, January 20, 1936.

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MR. SALISBURY: Now, we're sending you today another of Ruth Van Deman's Household Calendars. Miss Van Deman, it isn't often you're with us on Monday, but I think you feel at home on the Farm and Home Hour any day of the week.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, Mr. Salisbury, I certainly do feel at home on the Farm and Home Hour, Monday, Tuesday, or any day.

MR. SALISBURY: Well, what are you giving us on this third Monday of the first month of the year 1936.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Some information about canning meat.

MR. SALISBURY: Canning meat. Well, that's a timely topic if you're talking about meat from animals butchered on the farm. I've helped butcher hogs myself on cold and snowy days in January.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, that's the kind of meat I mean - farm-butchered pork, or beef, or lamb, or veal. In the Bureau of Home Economics we are constantly getting letters asking about the best method to use in canning meat on the farm. Mabel Stienbarger generally answers these questions, because she's the person on our staff who puts on her apron and goes into the laboratory and does the experiments. I had a long talk with her the other day and what I'm going to say about canning meat comes direct from her.

First of all, the kind of meat to can. It's possible to can any kind of lean meat provided it's clean, and wholesome, and chilled. Farm women have had success in canning beef, lamb, pork, veal, chicken, rabbit -

MR. SALISBURY: Rabbit? Domestic rabbit or wild rabbit?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Both. And other kinds of game too. Rabbit is canned in the same way as chicken, and venison and other kinds of game, in the same way as beef.

MR. SALISBURY: Home-canned venison. That's a delicacy I never tasted.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Nor I either, but it does exist. The point is that whatever the kind of meat, it needs thorough processing in a canner under steam pressure, 15 pounds of steam pressure, to be exact. Or translated into degrees of heat, 250° F. Holding steam under high pressure this way forces the heat right through the cans, until the meat at the center reaches a temperature hot enough to kill the bacteria that might make the meat spoil.

MR. SALISBURY: Then the steam pressure method is the only one you recommend for canning meat?

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MISS VAN DEMAN: Absolutely.

MR. SALISBURY: And you turn thumbs down on the water bath and the oven.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, sir. Meat is a protein food. Heat penetrates it slowly, it spoils easily, and some of the bacteria that cause it to spoil may be exceedingly dangerous to the health of anybody who eats the spoiled meat. So we recommend only the method we know to be a safe one, the method based on scientific research.

MR. SALISBURY: All right, Miss Van Deman. You've made that so emphatic I'll never forget it. The only safe way to can meat at home is to process it under steam pressure. Have I learned that lesson?

MISS VAN DEMAN: You have, Mr. Salisbury. A double star for you.

MR. SALISBURY: All right, what's next?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Lots of people wonder about the containers - whether to use glass jars or tin cans. The answer is both are all right. But for canning meat, considering the high temperature needed, tin cans are more practical, though of course they involve a special sealing machine. The advantages are you can seal them up before the processing so you don't lose any liquid in the canner. The heat penetrates them more quickly, and the minute you take the tin cans of meat out of the canner you can plunge them into running water to cool them. This stops the cooking and helps to prevent an overcooked flavor and texture in the meat.

MR. SALISBURY: What about the size of the tin cans or the glass jars? Anything to watch there?

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, Miss Stienbarger says it's better to use No. 2 or 2-1/2 tins cans for meat; and for glass jars, the pint size. No. 3 cans are so large they cause a lot of trouble in meat canning on a home scale. And so do quart jars. Meat in these larger containers requires a processing period of 120 minutes - 2 hours - at 15 pounds pressure. The No. 2 tin cans and the pint jars need only 85 minutes.

MR. SALISBURY: I see you have a mimeographed sheet there with full directions for canning all the different kinds of home-butchered meat.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Yes, your eyes do not deceive you, Mr. Salisbury.

MR. SALISBURY: And I take it you'll send that to any home canner in doubt about processing times and temperatures and what not.

MISS VAN DEMAN: Right again. The Bureau of Home Economics will be glad to send information on meat canning to any farm homemaker.

MR. SALISBURY: Just address your card to Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

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